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THE WHITENED HARVEST OF THE STUDENT WORLD

An Address to Students.

BY
JOHN R. MOTT.

DRUMMOND'S TRACT DEPOT,
STIRLING, SCOTLAND,
LONDON: S. W. PARTRIDGE & CO., LTD.

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The Whitened Harvest

Of The Student World.

MY recent journeys to the different Christian mission fields have impressed me that we are living in a new world.

Sir Robert Hart remarks, when he first went out to China, when he reached there, it impressed him that he was in a room with every door and window tightly closed, and that the impression made upon him later on toward the close of the Russo-Japanese war was that he was in a room with all the windows wide open, and with the breezes of heaven blowing through. I would apply that remark to the impression made upon me in all parts of the far East on my recent travels.

RUSSIA.

Changes in Russia.

On one of my former visits to the University of Toronto, I referred to certain experiences which I had had in Russia. What I then said is out of date, although I was speaking comparatively recently concerning that great field of which we know so little. You will perhaps remember I said that when I first went out to Russia fourteen years ago, I found it impossible to meet the students in any great numbers. In fact, had I been found with even five Russian students on a tram car, all of us would have been subject to arrest. Such meetings as I held at that time were held between midnight and four o'clock in the morning, not so much on account of risks that I ran for myself, but for risks that the students were running by attending these meetings. I held only one meeting at that time in a comparatively safe place, and that was in the British-American chapel, but there were spies even there. I had debated in my mind for the best part of two or three days what

to speak upon, and at length I decided to take the subject, "Secret Prayer." Had I taken any subject that suggested association, fellowship, or relationship to others, or organisation, or movement, or propaganda, I would not only have gotten myself into serious trouble, but also many other good friends. When I was in Russia a few years ago, on my most recent journey, in contrast to that experience, the largest theatres and public buildings that could be hired in the great university cities would not hold the throngs of agnostic and Jewish students. Of course we had among us quite a few Christians, but the great number of Russian students have been born into the Russian Church, and would not call themselves Christians. Most of them live in the zone of indifference or of unbelief, or are Jews. But they came in great multitudes, and it was impossible to get away any night without giving two or three addresses through an interpreter. The women students were there with the men students, and were quite as much interested. They said, " If we go down into the depths together, why

should we not rise to the heights together." The police would not allow them to stand in the aisles, but the theatres were filled to overflowing, and one of the things that has imprinted itself in my memory for ever was this sea of Russian faces, every face bearing the marks of tragedy. Nearly every Russian student has at least *contemplated* suicide. More Russian students contemplate suicide each year than there are suicides in all the rest of the world put together. There would usually be a space of time between the lectures, when they would walk up and down drinking Russian tea. I would try to get privacy, but they would walk through all bounds and try to get in there with me. At the end of the meeting they would crowd on to my street car and come down to my hotel. They would come there at all hours of the day, although they could not speak English and I could not speak Russian. We had no means of communication by language except when I had my interpreter present. But they seemed to gather round me, thinking if they could get near me they could get some help—that I,

coming as the representative of the students of other nations on an errand of mercy, must be able to give them some relief. And, finally, many of them, even large companies of them, came to be firm believers in Jesus Christ our Lord.

A Great Response.

I remember, when speaking to the students of one university, I put a very searching test. I said, "All of you who would like to enter into this great faith, I invite you to meet me to-morrow at two o'clock. To my astonishment, there assembled on that occasion over six hundred students, and we had a time of peculiar intensity, a time such as you have whether you have one man or twenty men or ten men, who are determined to find the truth, and to pay for what it costs. At the end of that memorable afternoon, practically every man and woman in that student company had decided that he wished to be an investigator of Christ and his teachings, and to make experiments in his or her own life as to the power of these teach-

ings. Then I had the most depressing feeling that ever comes to me. I am glad it does not come often. That was the experience of having to leave these six hundred without a guide. There was not a Christian professor, or even a Christian student movement, into whose hands I could place these eager and honest inquirers. I had to leave them, as it were, sheep among wild and ravenous beasts—and I had that experience more than once in Russia. To-day, we have Christian Student Unions and Christian professors in all of the great university communities of Russia. To-day, in contrast to those other years, we have also scores of Bible circles and apologetic investigation clubs, scattered all through the country of Russia. We have Russian professors now who are holding the position of reasonable faith in Christianity, and are serving as guides to such groups of students. We have a national student movement as the last movement to be received into the World's Student Federation, composed of members of the Russian Church who are devout believers in Christ, but working inside

that church on broad lines. We have a periodical in the Russian language. We have four foreign secretaries sent from North America. We have five Russian secretaries, raised up and developed by the native Russian student unions. And a few days ago I received word that a Christian union had rented the whole floor of one of the finest new buildings in a large Russian city as the headquarters for its propaganda. If you had said to me a few years ago, that I would live to see the time when I could report a Christian Student Movement binding together the students of Russia, I would have said, I do not expect to see that day, but I will die working for it.

We are going to see wonderful things in Russia. It is one of the great lands in regard to which I found myself in full accord with President Roosevelt when he says that no land more than Russia holds the faith of the coming years. We shall see great things accomplished in Russia when Russia comes to her own. That will be when she has a sufficient number of unselfish leaders. Where will they be found? Where they

have ever been found in other nations—in the seats of learning.

TURKEY.

What About Turkey.

When I first went to Turkey, about nineteen years ago, I raised the question, "Will it be possible for me to get close to the Mahommedan students?" Every missionary I asked about it said, "No, you will never live to see that day." It was not possible to hold public meetings. It was not deemed wise to hold private meetings, even for prayer. In contrast to those days, when I was recently in Turkey I gave a lecture under the auspices of the world-wide Christian student movement in Constantinople, the great political capital of the Mahommedans, at the regular convention of the World's Student Christian Federation. There we met the leaders of the Christian forces among students from twenty-five nations. Nearly fifty branches of Protestant Christian Churches were represented. Besides this, we had

Christians from the church of St. Mark in the Nile Valley: Christians from the Armenian Church, who had earned the right to be with us by the persecutions through which they had passed, and are still passing, to the shame of Christendom be it said. It was a wonderful company. There we were looking right into the Mahommedan world, and as we saw that world we saw that the things that divided us, while we acknowledge the deity of our Lord, were as nothing compared with the things that united us in front of that Mahommedan world. Not only did we have five days of sessions, but each night in Constantinople we had a session—one in French, one in German, one in English, one in Armenian, and one in Turkish. One of the best addresses was one given on **"Christianity as a Vital and Transforming power in the lives of individuals and of Nations."** I never thought I would live to see such a day as that in Constantinople.

A Wide Open Door.

Some of the students from the great

Mahommedan University at Stamboul said to me, "You are making a mistake in not coming to our city, to our students." I saw that by going down there very late in the evening I could get there and have time for one address. When I arrived there I found that they had been standing for hours, and in every place where the foot of man could get they were standing. And I could see scattered through the audience many wearing green turbans. I asked my interpreter what they signified. He said: "They are the fanatics of the Fanatics." I feared we were in for trouble, but I never had a more respectful or responsive audience than I had that night in that hot-bed of fanaticism. What was I trying to do? I was trying to lead them by reasonable steps up to Jesus Christ as the only sufficient Saviour, the living Christ. When it came to the conclusion, at nearly midnight, I could not make my way to the door. It took me over three-quarters of an hour to get to the door, although I had announced that I must leave immediately. These men pressed me on every side with questions—not questions involving mere idle curiosity, but questions of life and death. Men grasping like drowning men for a plank. You cannot wonder that I promised to come back if I could do so within a few

months. Contrary to the public impression, *that door is wide open.*

When I left Constantinople the first time—nineteen years ago—when I got on to the steamer I heard the crackling of the rifles as they were shooting the Armenians down in the streets, and I was told as I embarked that fourteen hundred of the young Turks had had stones tied around their necks and were drowned in the Bosphorus, because they had the courage to think out loud. Two years ago the Mahommedan theological students urged me to come back. To-day, notwithstanding the disappointing facts with reference to Turkey, the door is open. You can travel anywhere in Turkey. You can hold conventions and form Christian Associations. Only the other day one was organised in Beyrout, and one in Constantinople, and two of the finest men we could discover had been sent out as secretaries. No wonder I say that we are living in a new world.

INDIA.

Hindu Students Awake.

Now, let me take you into India. When I was in India the first time in 1895 and 1896, during the whole winter season,

I had many experiences that strengthened my faith. The best I could do then was to meet with little bands of the students, and we were able to start Christian Associations in the Mission Schools. A good many of the students became secret inquirers, and a very very few did become out and out Christians. One Indian student came to me one morning before daybreak and said, "Mr. Mott, I must see you." With great difficulty I prepared matters so that I could give him a little time. He said, "I have attended all your lectures. My reason is convinced that I must become a Christian. I will not have peace until I become one." He went on to tell me that he was the only son, and his father had told him that if he became a Christian he would disinherit him. When he told his mother he was seriously thinking of becoming a Christian, she struck her head against a door-post until the blood gushed out. She said it would be such a disgrace for her if her only son should become a Christian that she would feel like killing herself. I had to be honest with him. I told him that at times, for the sake of the truth, one had to forsake fathers, mothers, sisters and houses and lands, and that to the one that does so there comes an hundred-fold more even in this life. That morning, that

bright Mahommedan student bowed his knee for the first time to Jesus Christ, his Lord. He was right—he was cast off and disinherited by his parents. But I am glad to add that, later on, he was permitted to come back, and the change in his life was so genuine that the father was also converted to Christianity. I was informed of this by one of his relatives. It costs something to become a Christian in India even in this day. During the past winter season the largest buildings we could find in Madras, Bombay, or Calcutta were crowded to the doors with students eager to hear more of the Christian religion. There we had the greatest difficulty to which Mr. Eddy and I had been subjected. It was quite a different experience to what we had experienced. I remember well one afternoon, in Madras, Mr. Eddy was speaking to a large audience. The place was crowded to suffocation. One of the Hindoo Suttees had planned to break up the meeting at a critical juncture, and I noticed a number of students leaving the hall. I did not know until last summer at Northfield why they left. I thought at the time it was because they were displeased. I learned last summer why it was they left. It was the Christians who had gone out. They knew what was about to take place, and in a

room behind our meeting hall they poured out their hearts in prayer as only Asiatics can. We often wondered what happened at that meeting. Soon after the students left a hush fell on the meeting, and the audience seemed to be spellbound until we had finished our address. I learned the secret last summer at Northfield.

Hinduism Honeycombed with Secret Disciples.

Out of all these meetings came a great many investigators. Understand me, now, I do not say converts. We had had some converts—a few—and that means more than if we were to tell you that a thousand agnostic students in great cities like Toronto, or Montreal, or New York had come out whole souled in deep conviction that they had a reasonable faith in Christ. In my opinion there are not simply thousands but tens of thousands of secret disciples of Jesus Christ among the educated classes all over India. That great stronghold of Hinduism is honeycombed with these secret disciples. There will come a day of great ingathering, and if there are any people that I honour more than others in our vast mission fields, it is that body of missionaries in India who have the

courage to wait and to lay siege. Whom should we honour most of those men at Port Arthur? Those who swept over into the fortress, or those who laid down their lives in undermining? One is as indispensable as the other. And if I were a student in this university, looking for a difficult task, I am inclined to think that India would have a large place in my thoughts and in my decision. What an opportunity for heroism and for the highest kind of self-denial!

The Centre of Buddhism.

Whenever I go to Ceylon, my heart is also touched deeply, as I remember that from that little island went out thousands of Buddhist missionaries to storm the whole Asiatic Coast, and as a result there are more followers of the Buddhist religion than any other religion in the world. Ceylon is one of the citadels of Buddhism. It meant much to us, therefore, my friends, that during the time we were in Ceylon our meetings were crowded with these Buddhist students, and over five hundred became earnest inquirers into the Christian religion; and the Government showed its sympathy by giving lots for a proposed college site, and where we are now having erected a Christian hospital and university.

JAPAN.

A Wonderful Meeting in Tokyo.

I am strongly attached to Japan. I count my friends there among the thousands. The experiences I had there at intervals every five years have bound these people close to my heart. My last visit there was short. Most of my time was spent in connection with convention work, and although it was enough to take up all my strength, I said, "For refreshment, let me have the nights for the students." And so every night I met a great company of students. One night the Koreans were there, and the next night the Japanese. Over three hundred became inquirers, and over sixty have since been baptised. There was not a night that we did not have some of these brilliant Japanese students decide to become investigators.

Someone asked me in Kansas City what was the most wonderful meeting I had in this recent journey. I replied, "One night in Tokyo, which I will tell you about." I had cleared off all my correspondence by eleven o'clock in the morning of that day, and then a deputation of Koreans waited upon me, who had been investigating the Christian religion. Then

I took a taxi, and there gave an address to a large number of Japanese, many of whom decided to become investigators. Then I was due at the Foreign Office for a banquet. Then I took another taxi, and went to the office of the Californian Consul. It was a dark time between Japan and California, and the Californian Consul wished to consult me about the matter which was pending between them. Then I went to the Japanese University, and gave the students an address. Then I went over and met the National Committee of the Y.M.C.A. Then we went in to dinner, and the day's work began. I went down town after dinner to the front of the great University in Tokyo. In some ways, my friends, it was the most remarkable university in the world. Five thousand graduate students, not undergraduates, but their mature students, and five hundred professors, nearly all of whom had gained one or more degrees in Europe or America. It is one of the great universities of Asia. We had the largest hall in that building for a meeting that night. I came down late, and found every seat taken. I said to God (I say this reverently): "It is time for Thee to work." It was not in me that night. My interpreter was also exhausted, and that night we had to give four addresses, talk-

ing nearly four hours. Quietly but surely, the truth did its work, the Spirit of God using the truth, and when it came to the last moment, we had over three hundred of these mature men, including, if I remember rightly, two whom you would call professors, all advanced students, who declared with that humility that Christ had in mind when He said: "Except ye become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter the Kingdom of Heaven," that they were willing to make the following promises:

1. I will make a thorough investigation of the four gospels, and in order that I may do this well, I will meet with kindred spirits until the summer months.

2. I will pray to God daily for wisdom to find the truth, and for grace to follow it when I find it.

3. When my reason and conscience will permit me to do so, I will take Christ as my Saviour and Lord.

Now that was a scientific test. It showed what was in their minds. You will not be surprised, and I was not surprised, to hear that since that time many of these men have been baptised. That night I considered to be the most remarkable experience I had on my recent trip.

CHINA.

Conquering the Student Gibraltar.

What shall I say about China? When I first went to China no missionary could get the students assembled. They were not permitted to gather together for a meeting, the scholars of that land of scholars, the greatest land of scholars that the world has ever known. When I went back I spent one whole half day with the staff of the leading Christian College, discussing how to get at the literati of China. We decided that we should not live to see the day that we could get at them. When I wrote my first book, I spoke of the students of China as the Gibraltar of the student world. By this I meant that they held an impregnable position. When I went back to China in 1907 the walls of Jericho were beginning to crumble, and in some places I could look through. I was permitted to step over and meet little groups of them. I began in Canton. A large university is located there. I started down town quite early, and saw crowds of students in the streets. We had hired the largest theatre in town. It was practically full of students. We had fifty of them on the platform. Many of these were young men

who had studied in America or in England, or in Europe, and most of them held prominent positions in the Government. The first night the chair was taken by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court—not a Christian. Each night we gave two, and after the first night three, addresses, all through interpreters. The problem each night was to get enough men to go away in order that we might get a closer grapple on those who were ready to press on into this country of liberty. In the end seven hundred of these students had signed the three promises that I have already outlined, and they were so much in earnest that though it was Chinese New Year, the last week I was in Canton, they never missed a meeting. The day before I left a large deputation of these investigators waited on me and said: "Mr. Mott, we want to know why we have got to be baptised. We want you to hold another meeting and give us convincing reasons why we ought to be baptised." I had no time, however. Every moment was already taken up. At last it occurred to me that some of the Chinese students were going to give me a banquet, and I said, "I will slip out between the courses and tell you why you should be baptised." They took me at my word, and as I sat at the banquet the message was brought

in to me that my student investigators were outside. I went out, and as most of them stood, I explained with elementary simplicity the significance of baptism. I then said, "How many of you are ready to take that step." Seventeen of them responded, and said, "I want to take it next Sunday." I recently heard that over one hundred of them have been baptised. That shows the break in the Chinese walls.

By Confucius' Grave.

We went from Canton up into the Province of Confucius, and there I fulfilled a lifelong desire to visit his tomb. We pressed on to the capital of the Province, Tsi-nan-fu. There we have a student movement, and missionaries at work among the students. In that city, where in former years our missionaries have had very grave difficulties, the Governor of the Province opened to us the Parliament Buildings. The next morning after my arrival the Governor and his cabinet asked to meet me, and I delivered an address to them on the "Relation of Ethics to Education and to Religion." He said: "We ought to have a Christian Association. I will give the land if you will put up a building."

That afternoon we met with the students,

and that meeting stands out in my memory as one of the greatest manifestations of the power of God. The meeting had begun in the middle of the afternoon. They allowed us to bring lights (candles), and the last scene as the shades of evening gathered was a company of six hundred Chinese students, from the Province of Confucius, who were eagerly investigating Christianity, and who had signed the three promises which I have herein mentioned already.

And so I say again, we are in a new world. Old things have passed away, and all things have become new. These great battlefields are now great harvest fields. They are yellow and ripe for harvest. The time has come to reap. And I am here to-night for reapers.*

* The Lecture which is reprinted by permission of the Publishers of the *Evangelical Christian*, Toronto, was prepared and has reference to religious and social conditions existing in the various nations prior to the outbreak of the great war now raging in Europe and Asia.